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TRACHOMA.

PREVALENCE IN KNOX COUNTY, TENN.

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The extent to which trachoma is present among school children is a fair index of the incidence of the disease in the general population, and doubtless some valuable indications of probable results of a house-to-house inspection might have been obtained by an examination of the pupils in the public schools. The public schools not being in session at the time the examination was made, the investigation had to be limited to such institutions in and around Knoxville as contain inmates the entire year.

Institutions examined.—Three such institutions were available for examination, viz, the Knox County Poor Farm, the Knox County Industrial School, and the Episcopal Orphanage.

Knox County Poor Farm.—This institution is situated about 10 miles outside of Knoxville. Through the courtesy of Mr. Ogden, of that city, the writer was enabled to visit the farm and examine 60 of the inmates, of whom 17, or about 28 per cent, were found to be suffering from trachoma. In many instances the disease was severe in type and some gave histories of having been affected from childhood.

It is interesting to note that one inmate, presenting the disease in such severe form as to render the supposition likely that his presence on the poor farm was due to loss of efficiency through the disease, stated that he had suffered from "sore eyes" all his life and came from Lee County, Va. The remainder of the trachomatous inmates stated, with one or two exceptions, that they came from Knox County.

Knox County Industrial School.—This institution was also visited. It is pleasantly and healthfully situated upon a hill about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles out of Knoxville. The prevalence of trachoma on the Knox County Poor Farm rendered it likely that the disease would be found among

the pupils at the industrial school, but hardly to the extent which the following figures indicate.

Out of 139 white pupils examined 66, or about 47.5 per cent, were found infected with trachoma—a serious condition of affairs. Of these 66 cases, 31 were severe and 35 were mild. One boy had already become practically blind as a result of the disease. Twenty-nine colored pupils were examined, of whom 3, or 10 per cent, were suffering from trachoma. This is interesting, in view of the impression which has erroneously prevailed that the negro race is immune to trachoma. It should be stated that the cases of trachoma found among the colored students were in full-blood negroes. The writer's personal opinion is that the negro is probably less susceptible than the white man to trachoma, but that, when once the disease is contracted, its course is practically the same in both races.

Episcopal Orphanage.—This institution was examined at the request of one of the directors. Thirty-five children were examined, and only one case of trachoma was found. This was of a mild type. The sanitary conditions at this institution were good and the medical supervision was competent.

The incidence of trachoma at this institution—namely, about 3 per cent—is probably nearer the actual rate of prevalence among the general population of Knox County than the very high percentages found at the Knox County Industrial School and at the poor farm.

In justice to the authorities of these institutions it should be stated that they were unaware of the conditions shown by the investigation. The matter was brought immediately to the attention of the board of directors, and it is thought that prompt steps will be taken to combat the disease.

The following recommendations were made:

1. Screening of all doors and windows.
2. Separate beds for each individual.
3. Individual towels.
4. Segregation of trachomatous pupils.
5. The use of only shower baths for bathing purposes and of only running water for hand and face washing.
6. Competent medical treatment for the trachomatous.
7. Medical examination of future pupils upon admission.